

Depression and You....

Who gets Depressed?

Depression is a very common but highly treatable condition that affects about 1 in every 20 Americans each year. Depression is not a character flaw, a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. Depression is a medical illness that can affect anyone. Over 11 million people every year have this illness, with twice as many women as men. Many women are particularly vulnerable after the birth of a baby. Men are less likely to suffer from depression but are also less likely to admit that they have the illness.

Unfortunately, many people with depression do not tell their primary care doctor how they are feeling. Talking to their doctor about how they feel is the depressed person's first important step toward getting better.

What is depression?

Since depression is a medical condition, like diabetes or heart disease, it is more than just of feeling of sadness or being "down in the dumps". It affects your day to day life and your thoughts, ideas, actions and physical well being.

Some common causes may include: certain medical conditions, some medications, drugs or alcohol, family history or other mental illness conditions. It may result from certain life events, such as the loss of a loved one, or by stress. An imbalance in the chemicals in the brain that control mood can also cause depression.

REMEMBER: Depression is NOT the result of a weakness or a fault, it is a medical illness that can be effectively treated.

How will I know if I am depressed?

People who are depressed generally experience one or more of the following symptoms

ALL DAY, NEARLY EVERY DAY, FOR AT LEAST 2 WEEKS.

- Loss of interest in things previously enjoyed
- Feeling sad, blue, or down in the dumps.

You may also have at least three (3) of the following symptoms:

- Feeling restless, slowed down or unable to sit still
- An increase or decrease in appetite or weight
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Feeling tired all the time, or loss of energy.
- Other symptoms you may experience include:
 - > Headaches
 - > Aches and pains
 - > Being anxious or worried.
 - > Digestive problems
 - > Feeling hopeless
 - > Nausea and/or vomiting

What should I do if I have these symptoms?

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR: Many people suspect that something is wrong but hesitate to find help or feel guilty or responsible for their symptoms. Sometimes they are not aware that help and treatment is available. If you think you may have a problem there are health care providers that can help you. They can help you find out if there is a physical cause for your symptoms, treat the symptoms or refer you to a mental health specialist for evaluation.

How will treatment help me?

Treatment will help to lessen or remove your symptoms and return you to your normal life. Treatment is aimed at complete remission of symptoms and staying well afterward. You can also help your primary care doctor treat you more effectively by participating in your treatment through ASKING QUESTIONS and FOLLOWING THROUGH WITH TREATMENT that both you and your doctor decide is best for you.

What type of treatment will I get?

As with any illness, sometimes more than one type of treatment may be tried to find what works best for you. It is important not to get discouraged since many options exist and many people can expect improvement and recovery.

The primary treatments for depression include medication, talking with a therapist or medication combined with talking to a therapist.

Who may provide mental health treatment?

Depression, depending upon the symptoms, may be treated by primary care providers as well as specialized mental health providers. The primary care provider you see may refer you to a mental health specialist such as: a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a social worker, or a case manager.

Who should see a mental health specialist?

Although many people are successfully treated for depression by their primary care provider, there are times when it may be necessary for referral to a specialized mental health provider. Some common reasons for a referral may include the need for a combination of treatments, or for very severe or persistent symptoms that do not improve with treatment. If you think you need to see a specialty provider, talk to the doctor, nurse, or case manager.

How will doctor or nurse know if I have depression?

Your health care provider will assess your physical and mental condition during your visit in order to decide if you are depressed. The following activities may occur:

- > Answering Depression Screening Questions of filling out a Health Questionnaire.
- > Discussion of your symptoms
- > Perform a physical exam to determine your general health status
- > Perform some basic laboratory tests.
- > Inquire about your family's medical and mental history

THERE IS HOPE. THERE IS HELP. TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR TODAY.

References: 1) Rost K. *Depression Tool Kit for Primary Care* NIMH grant NH54444. 2) 2003 CIGNA Behavioral Health. 3) AHCPR, *Management of Major Depressive Disorder in Adults, Instructions for Patient Education, Patient's Guide*, 1993. 4) Strock, Margaret (2004). Depression. NIH Publication No. 04-3561, National Institute of mental Health, National Institutes of health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Bethesda, MD, 20 pp. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm>